

Important Information About Emergency Medical Services In Your Community

Dear Fellow Resident,

Western Berks Ambulance, a not-for-profit agency, has served the community since 1961, providing service to all. For many years the organization was able to operate as a completely volunteer company relying on the time donated by our fellow community members. However, as the volunteer pool shrank and governmental regulations increased, we had no choice but to hire personnel.

As a result of the need for paid persons we instituted a membership program that provides the necessary funds to operate. The amount that we bill does not cover our operating costs, but along with the membership program we are usually able to post a modest surplus.

The surplus that we realize is immediately put back into the company to buy new equipment. In 2007, we posted a surplus of \$215,000 and we immediately used the entire amount to purchase two ambulances. We need to replace our vehicles and equipment on a regular schedule in order to continue to provide the best possible care to the community.

Over the years, approximately 39% of you supported us through the membership program; today that has dwindled to 29%. **That means 29% of the community supports a service that 100% of the residents expect to be there when they call!** Our current cost for the membership program is \$45.00 for seniors and \$60.00 per regular household.

With increased costs, increased call volume and decreased membership support, we realized that we needed to find a better solution. We recently met with your local government representatives and asked that they participate in a “**Municipal Ambulance Membership**”. A municipal membership would function just like your trash service or any other per household service you currently receive. **If we received 100% participation we could reduce our membership fee to \$30.00 per household.**

Imagine that! A service that is **reducing** the cost to you! It would mean that every member of the community will now be paying their fair share for a vital community service.

On the next page are some of the questions asked by your officials and the answers we provided. We hope you take a moment to read this information and let your officials know your thoughts. We would also welcome your comments and questions.

We are proud to say that you will not find a more dedicated and professional EMS staff than at Western Berks Ambulance. Feel free to go to our website at www.wbems.org so you can read about how Western Berks is ***“Continuing to make a difference in the community”***. You can also email us directly through our website with your thoughts.

Thank you for your time,

Western Berks Ambulance Association
Board of Directors

Questions and Answers about the Municipal Ambulance Membership

1. How will the money be collected?

- a. We have asked the municipality to provide the equivalent of \$30.00/household in whatever method works best for your local government.

2. How much will using the ambulance cost me as a member?

- a. For medically necessary (as defined by Medicare) emergency and non-emergency ambulance service, we are required to bill your primary and secondary insurance company. We will accept whatever they pay as 'payment in full' and you will not be responsible for any portion of our bill that is not covered. If you have no insurance at all, you will owe nothing.

3. What happens if Western Berks is busy and another mutual-aid ambulance arrives at my house?

- a. While this seldom occurs, we have mutual-aid billing agreements in place with the majority of the ambulance services in Berks County. This agreement allows them to honor our membership, as we would do the same for their members. Again, no out-of-pocket expenses for any medically necessary ambulance service if you're served by another ambulance company.

4. What happens if the municipalities choose not to enact the membership?

- a. We will still respond and provide the same service as always, however, our membership cost will increase in each of the categories, Senior Household and Regular Household alike. We will also have to raise the base-rate billing for all our services.

5. What should I do if I have questions about my membership or a bill I received?

- a. There's bound to be questions along the way and we encourage you to call our billing office anytime you need assistance. Our helpful, and highly competent staff of billing specialists will be able to assist you with any questions about your membership with us, or assist you in dealing with your insurance company.

A detailed membership booklet will be mailed to every household in our coverage area.